

Real Treasure and Real Contentment

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[0 : 0 0] Well, now we come to our reading of the Bible, and perhaps you turn with me to Paul's first letter to Timothy, chapter 6, and if you have one of our hardback Bibles, you'll find that on page 993.

So 1 Timothy, chapter 6, and we're finishing off our studies in this letter tonight. We've just sung the words from Psalm 95, if you hear his voice today, do not reject what he will say.

There is something about the human heart that wants to reject the words of God sometimes. So let's, as we listen now, open our ears and take to heart as well as to mind the things that the Lord says to us.

So 1 Timothy, chapter 6. The passage we'll be studying tonight begins at the end of chapter 2, but I'll pick it up from the beginning of the whole chapter. Let all who are under a yoke as slaves regard their own masters as worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and the teaching may not be reviled.

Those who have believing masters must not be disrespectful on the ground that they are brothers. Rather, they must serve all the better, since those who benefit by their good service are believers and beloved.

[1 : 1 8] Teach and urge these things. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

He has an unhealthy craving for controversy and for quarrels about words, which produce envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction among people who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain.

Now, there is great gain in godliness with contentment, for we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

[2 : 3 5] But, as for you, O man of God, flee these things. Pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, steadfastness, gentleness.

Fight the good fight of the faith. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called and about which you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I charge you, in the presence of God, who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus, who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession to keep the commandment unstained and free from reproach until the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ, which he will display at the proper time.

He who is the blessed and only sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see.

To him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen. As for the rich in this present age, charge them not to be haughty, nor to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy.

They are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is truly life.

[4 : 09] O Timothy, guard the deposit entrusted to you. Avoid the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge, for by professing it, some have swerved from the faith.

Grace be with you. Amen. This is the word of the Lord, and may God add his blessing to it for us this evening. Well, let's turn to the first letter of Timothy, chapter 6, page 993.

My title for this evening is Real Treasure and Real Contentment. Now, as we look at this final section of 1 Timothy this evening, I want us initially to notice Paul's urgent tone.

There's a great urgency here. He's a little bit like Mo Farah running the last lap of the 5,000 meters. You see in that he speeds up and he applies pressure as he sees the finishing line coming.

And in a similar way as Paul sees the finishing line coming for this letter, he begins to use verbs of command to Timothy. Look with me at the verses. Verse 2. Teach and urge these things.

[5 : 41] These things being the content of the first five chapters of the letter. All the above, you might say. Then verse 11. Flee these things. These things there being the rotten corruptions detailed in verses 3 to 10.

And still in verse 11. Pursue various good things. Verse 12. Fight. Verse 12 again. Take hold. Verse 13.

I charge you in the presence of God to keep the commandment unstained. Verse 17. As for the rich, charge them.

Verse 20. Guard the deposit. Avoid the babble and contradictions of the false teachers. Teach. Urge. Flee.

Pursue. Fight. Take hold. Charge. Avoid. It's strong stuff and it's powerfully worded. Reading this. Timothy can't have felt like a man stepping into a radon bath for a gentle half hour of soaking.

[6 : 45] He must have felt more like a man being pressure hosed by a fire engine. So why is Paul in such a passion? The reason is that he loves the Lord.

He loves the gospel. And he loves the church. These church fellowships at Ephesus where Paul had stationed Timothy. Paul loved these fellowships. He had spent three years of his life evangelizing Ephesus.

And when he wrote this letter, he'd been away from Ephesus for two or three years. And he knew that false teaching was creeping in and threatening to destroy the work. And he'd sent Timothy there as a troubleshooter.

Timothy, his most trusted lieutenant. So these powerful imperatives all stem from his great love for the church. Now certainly, he's asking a lot of Timothy.

But he writes like this because his great desire is to establish true teaching in the church and to clear out the false teaching which is threatening to damage this church beyond repair.

[7 : 44] Look at the verbs that Paul uses in verse 10 and in verse 21. Verse 10, some have wandered away from the faith. And then verse 21, some have swerved from the faith.

So Paul pictures true Christian teaching and living as walking along a straight path. But he's saying it's possible to wander away from the path. Like a foolish sheep.

Or even to swerve from the path like a car that hits black ice. And back in chapter 1, verse 19, he had spoken of those who make shipwreck of their faith because they're not willing to hold it firm.

So much is at stake. And that is why Paul is speaking here so strongly. And of course, the churches today need to be equally alert. First, because the dangers that threatened Ephesus in 60 AD are never far from any church in any generation.

Well, I'd like us to look at the passage under two main headings. First, we'll look at the foul fruits of false teaching. And secondly, at the fragrant fruit of true teaching, true gospel teaching.

[8 : 54] First, then false teaching and its characteristic foul fruits. It's worth noticing the standard from which the false teaching deviates and how Paul describes that standard.

In chapter 6, verse 1, Paul simply speaks of the teaching. Then in verse 3 of chapter 6, he speaks of the teaching that accords with godliness.

In the same verse, 6-3, he mentions the sound words of our Lord Jesus. Literally, the healthy or health-giving words. Then in verse 5, he speaks of the truth.

In verse 10, he writes of the faith. And he uses that same phrase in verse 12. Fight the good fight of the faith. And again in verse 21, some have swerved from the faith.

Then in verse 14, he speaks of the commandment. And in verse 20, he calls true teaching the deposit. So the teaching, the truth, the faith, the commandment, the deposit.

[10 : 01] It is an entity with boundaries. And as I hinted a moment ago from verse 3, it's healthy in the sense that it's health-giving. That means that when we embrace the truth of the gospel, it brings health and soundness into our life.

It remakes us from within. It produces what David in Psalm 23 calls the restoration of the soul. Whereas false teaching is like a disease being introduced into the system.

In verse 4, the false teacher has an unhealthy, morbid craving. So sound, healthy-giving words, health-giving words are contrasted here with unhealthy cravings.

Now let's remind ourselves also of what the false teaching looked like. In chapter 1, verse 4, Paul had spoken of the false teachers devoting themselves to myths and endless genealogies.

Then in chapter 1, verse 7, he describes the corrupted teachers as wanting to be teachers of the law. That means the law of Moses. But, says Paul in that verse, they are ignoramuses.

[11 : 07] They don't understand what they're talking about because, verse 8, they've never understood the real purpose of the law at all. So they're putting themselves forward as Bible teachers, but they don't understand their Bibles.

Then in chapter 4, verses 1 to 5, Paul tells us that they were ascetic legalists. They were laying regulations on people which the Bible never lays on people.

Don't marry, they were saying. And don't eat certain foods. Their position seems to have been that our two most basic God-given appetites, the appetite for sex and the appetite for food, are nasty and tainted, and therefore should not be pandered to.

But to deny marriage is to defy God. It's one of his great gifts to us. And to deny good foods is to reject God's good and kind provision for our needs. Then you'll see in chapter 4, verse 7, Paul mentions myths again.

He calls them irreverent, silly myths. Irreverent, because they don't take God seriously. And silly, because they don't help anyone to engage with reality. And then finally, at the very end, chapter 6, verse 20, Paul speaks of the irreverent babble and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge.

[12 : 25] So what a casserole of folly it all is. It's full of words. It's full of chatter and babble, hot air. But all it amounts to is myths, invented stories, not the God-centered Old Testament history.

Endless genealogies. Not the purposeful genealogies of the Old Testament, but fabricated family trees. Then godless, ascetic rules, which can only produce sexual frustration and lean, gaunt, miserable, thin bodies.

And all of it couched in irreverence and silliness. And then it's described as knowledge. We're in the know, you know. Wouldn't you like to be in the know with us? That kind of thing.

That's what knowledge does. Knowledge in that sense. It produces an in-crowd of superior beings who are bound to look down their noses at other people. Well, let's look at the consequences now or the fruit of this kind of false teaching.

We'll pick up the trail at chapter 6, verse 3. If anyone teaches a different doctrine and does not agree with the sound words of our Lord Jesus Christ and the teaching that accords with godliness, he is puffed up with conceit and understands nothing.

[13 : 41] Now, that is a very strong description. One modern Bible translation says he is a conceited idiot. Another translation calls him a pompous ignoramus.

Would you want to have lunch with a man like that? He understands nothing, but he thinks that he knows a great deal. And what effect does his self-contradictory babbling talk have on members of the church?

Well, verse 4 says, look with me at verse 4. These unhealthy cravings produce controversy and quarrels about words. In other words, people start to fall out with each other as they discuss these silly myths and endless genealogies.

I assert, says one of these controversialists, I assert that Mrs. Melchizedek had five sons and three daughters. On the contrary, says another member of the discussion group.

The fact is that Mrs. Melchizedek had four sons and four daughters. And I would have you know in addition, because I was told this confidentially by a seventh son of a seventh son of my acquaintance, that although Genesis gives us no clue about the date of Mr. Melchizedek's birth, he was actually born 903 years after the flood.

[14 : 55] Oh, tosh, piffle, and boulder dash, says somebody else. So the whole thing goes on, rather nastier than that, until somebody finally stamps their foot, gets up, leaves the group in high dudgeon, and doesn't speak to anybody for a fortnight.

So what does all this lead to? Look with me halfway through verse five. It's rather chilling. Controversy about, and quarrels about words, which produce, produce, now here comes the foul fruit, envy, dissension, slander, evil suspicions, and constant friction.

Five very nasty things, which, when taken together, constitute a complete breakdown of human relationships. Just think about them. Envy. The jealous resentment of other people's abilities.

Dissension. Competing to get one's own way, rather than gently submitting to other people. Slander. Speaking unkindly about other people, and damaging their reputations.

Evil suspicions. Now we know that real Christian fellowship is based on trust. But if we start to suspect, to be suspicious of one another, and suspecting each other of nasty motives, that happy trust breaks down, and those who were once friends fall out with each other.

[16 : 18] And then finally, constant friction. Harmony and love in the fellowship are banished, and people come to dislike and fear each other. Now, healthy gospel teaching promotes loving and healthy relationships.

But this false teaching, the teaching of these conceited ignoramuses, causes the fellowship to fall apart. Now, we know that churches do fall apart sometimes.

It's not always because of false teaching. There are sometimes other factors involved. But when the true gospel is abandoned, danger is always imminent. Verse 5 tells us more.

To be deprived of the truth accompanies being depraved in mind. The mechanisms of good, healthy thinking break down when the mind is deprived of the oxygen of the true gospel.

The true gospel builds up lovely human relationships, whereas a false gospel will break them down. Now, it's here that Paul shows us a further nasty fruit of the type of false teaching which was bothering the Ephesians.

[17 : 24] Look at the end of verse 5. Depravity of mind and deprivation of the truth can cause people to imagine that godliness, now that has inverted commas around it, he really means religious practice, not real godliness, but they imagine that religion can be a means of gain, financial gain.

Now, we know that Ephesus in Paul's day in the first century was a pretty wealthy city. The cult of the goddess Diana, sometimes known as Artemis, was a big thing in Ephesus.

It brought a lot of trade into the city and in Acts chapter 19, we read the story of Paul being almost lynched in a riot at Ephesus because the silversmiths and the craftsmen who made the shrines and statues of the goddess were losing a lot of income because of Christianity.

People in Ephesus were becoming Christians in quite large numbers and therefore no longer going to these little shops and buying what you might call Artemis tat, little silver statues and bracelets and lucky charms and bric-a-brac.

For centuries, Ephesus had combined religion and money-making and that mindset had perhaps crept into some people who had come to Christ in a superficial way but had not yet deeply embraced the gospel.

[18 : 44] Now we'll come back to verses 6 and 7 and 8 in just a moment but let's read Paul's great warning in verses 9 and 10 first. Verse 9, Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Now that is not just about Ephesus in 60 AD. There's a warning there for all of us in every generation. Let me ask then, do you have money? The answer is yes.

Maybe a lot, maybe a little but you have money. The clothes that you're wearing cost at least a few pounds. I've enjoyed a good lunch today and it wasn't free. You've probably had a good lunch today as well.

We all have a certain amount of money and we couldn't live without at least a modest income. Money in itself is morally neutral but Paul tells us in verse 9 that it's the desire to be rich that brings temptations and in verse 10 it's the love of money.

[19 : 59] Not money in itself but the love of money which is a root of all kinds of evils. What kinds of evils then are produced by a love of money?

Let me name just a few. Cheating Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs. Commercial fraud. Perjury. Robbery.

Blackmail. Blackmail. That'd be a nice easy way to earn a few thousand pounds wouldn't it? Let's try a few more. False marriages for the sake of financial advantage. Drug dealing.

Pornography. People trafficking. Black marketeering. And in general telling lies. Are you have you ever been tempted to get hold of a bit of extra money by dishonest means?

Has that temptation ever crossed the little screen of one's brain? It certainly has crossed my screen. I guess it's true of all of us, isn't it? The seeds of the love of money lurk in every human heart.

[21 : 03] So let's notice what Paul says about this universal temptation. First, in verse 9, wanting to be rich brings people into many senseless and harmful desires, he says, that plunge them, not lowers them gently, but plunges people into ruin and destruction.

Plunged. Rapidly. Violently. Into ruin and destruction. Now, Paul could not have chosen stronger words. Jesus said something very similar.

What does it profit a man to gain the whole world and yet forfeit his life? Many people forfeit their lives or their souls far more cheaply. They don't gain the whole world.

It might be just for the sake of a few thousand grubby pounds, but the price they pay is ruin and destruction. Then secondly, from verse 10, Paul says that this craving for money or love of money causes some to wander away from the faith.

So you might say to a friend one day, are you not with us at church anymore? And the friend says, no. And you say, why not? He says, my business concerns have become just so pressing that I can't keep up with church as well.

[22 : 16] In other words, he was presented with a choice between God and mammon and he chose mammon. It's impossible to serve both, says Jesus. And verse 10 tells us more, wandering away from the faith and piercing themselves with many pangs.

The pangs of worry and anxiety, perhaps the pangs of a much disregarded conscience, leading finally to despair. I read of a famous American multimillionaire in the 19th century whose name was Jay Gould.

And as he died, his last words were, one of the richest men in America, his last words were these, I am the most miserable devil in the world. An addiction to money not only brings wretchedness, it can deprive us of our eternal salvation.

Verses 9 and 10 here are one of the great warnings of the New Testament. And we would be great fools to disregard them. You might be a young person with a great deal of ability.

And while you would quite like to follow the Lord Jesus, you're also consciously nourishing an ambition to make a lot of money. Be careful. It could cost you more than anyone would wish to pay.

[23 : 31] The Bible is full of great warnings about people who came to grief through coveting, wanting money or possessions or something else. Adam and Eve coveted something which brought them the death sentence.

Judas Iscariot badly wanted 30 pieces of silver. Ananias and Sapphira wanted a little bit more and they were hastened into their graves. Well, let's move on now to a much happier subject and that is Paul's teaching about the fragrant fruits of godly teaching, healthy gospel teaching.

At the end of verse 5, he's mentioned the gain in money which some of these false teachers covet. But you'll see how in verse 6, he picks up this word gain again and uses it in a very different way.

He says, there is great gain in godliness but it's measured not in terms of money but in terms of contentment. Contentment. The truly godly life is one that is marked by contentment.

And he goes on to explain in verse 7. For he says, we brought nothing into the world and we cannot take anything out of the world. He's more or less quoting from the beginning of the book of Job there.

- [24 : 46] In Job chapter 1, Job is rapidly deprived, really within a few hours, of everything he possesses. All his flocks and herds, his children are all killed, his money, everything goes. And yet he doesn't despair or turn away from God. He acknowledges the truth about every human being when he says, naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return.

In other words, having nothing is the basic human condition. We all start there and we all end there. Just try to imagine the moment when you were delivered from your mother's womb.

You won't remember that. But just try to imagine that moment. You were a little scrap of damp humanity. Was there a silver spoon in your mouth when you emerged into the light of day?

Was your little right hand clutching a wallet full of 20 pound notes? We brought nothing into the world, says Paul, and we cannot take anything out of the world. Perhaps I've got wealthy Americans on my mind because of Mr. Trump's election this last few days, but I also remember reading the story of another American multimillionaire who died about 100 years ago.

- [25 : 58] His name was William H. Vanderbilt. And when he died, he died very suddenly. He was a very rich man. And because he died very suddenly, the financiers on Wall Street were all in a flutter about his death.

And two financiers were talking about Mr. Vanderbilt together. One said to the other, do you know how much money William Vanderbilt left? Yes, I do, said the other.

He left it all. That is Paul's point at the end of verse 7. We cannot take anything out of this world. But he goes on, if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.

And what he means by food and clothing is the basic necessities of life. He's not commending grinding poverty, still less destitution. The Bible never sees real poverty as a blessing.

There's a very interesting passage about poverty and riches in Proverbs chapter 30. Here's what the writer says. He's actually praying to God as he says this. Give me neither poverty nor riches.

- [27 : 04] Feed me with the food that I need, lest I be full and deny you and say, who is the Lord? Or lest I be poor and steal and profane the name of my God.

Riches, the writer is saying, can lead to a false sense of security where a person says, I've got everything I need. Why should I need to acknowledge the Lord as well? I'm quite self-sufficient.

That's the rich man's temptation. But the poor man is tempted to steal in order to survive. And that would lead him to profane God's name, to dishonor God by breaking one of the Ten Commandments.

Imagine the scene in court. So, you stole the packet of beef burgers from Sainsbury's, did you, Mr. Smith? Yes, Your Honor. I was very hungry.

And you claim to be a Christian, Mr. Smith? Yes, Your Honor. I wasn't aware that the Bible encouraged Christians to steal, Mr. Smith. No, Your Honor.

- [28 : 09] Look back to verse 8. But if we have food and clothing with these, we will be content. What Paul is teaching us here is to learn contentment, even if we have no more in material terms than just the most basic necessities.

Paul's own example, when you think of it, takes us even further. He wrote his letter to the Philippians from prison, where he would have been, had barely enough food and clothes, and he would have been contending with other things as well, with chains around his ankles, and filth, and cold, probably lice and rats.

But even from prison, he was able to write, I have learned, in whatever situation I am, to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound.

In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me. Now, we live in a very greedy and covetous world, and we know that.

If the world can see that Christians are content with food and clothing, content not to be charging around frantically trying to accumulate more money and more possessions, then the world will be drawn to Christ.

[29 : 29] Godliness with contentment is a fragrant fruit of true gospel teaching. Ask yourself, am I a contented Christian? Now, Paul has more to say about money in verses 17 to 19.

He knows Ephesus, he knows about its wealth, and he knows that some of the Christians at Ephesus have made money. But he doesn't tell Timothy to tell them to throw their money away, not at all.

He says three things to Timothy to say to the rich people in Ephesus, the Christians who have money. First, he says, charge them not to be haughty. Verse 17.

Friends, just look at your own nose for a moment. Can you do that? It's a difficult thing to do, isn't it? But if you just turn your eyes down a bit, you can just see it, can't you? You have to go a bit boss-eyed. But just look at your own nose. Do you have a superior kind of nose?

Our noses vary, don't they? Some are short, squat. Some are broad. Some are aquiline. Some are aristocratic. But whatever sort of nose you have, just tilt your head back for a moment and look around at the other people.

[30 : 41] And if you just keep, if you keep doing that for a little while, you will feel very superior, won't you? Very haughty. Now, Paul says, that is what riches can do for a person.

So Christians of Ephesus, don't look down your noses on others because you're wealthy. Then secondly, charge them, says Paul, not to trust their wealth.

Not to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches. It's the uncertainty of riches that makes the 100 share index go up and down so rapidly these days. Financial people, big financiers, they're perpetually living on a knife edge.

They have the jitters, perpetually. They're constantly listening to what's happening in London and in New York and in Shanghai. Mr. Trump only has to utter five words about his proposed policies and world markets can lose or gain two percent of their value in one day.

In verse 17 here, Paul holds out a choice of two places for putting our trust. A, riches, which are completely uncertain, he says.

[31 : 47] And B, God, who richly provides us with everything to enjoy. Everything is certain when we look to him. But thirdly, says Paul to Timothy, get the wealthier Christians to use their money.

As he puts it in verse 18, to do good, to be generous and ready to share, to provide food and clothing for those who don't have them, to sustain gospel work and gospel workers.

Think of it. Missionaries and pastors and churches all need money in order to keep working and doing their job. Our church, look at these electric lights that we have blazing this evening.

They don't run on fresh air and excitement, apparently. Everything has to be paid for. I remember some time ago, an elderly, wealthy, Christian man told me about his money.

He had a lot. And he said this to me, more or less. He said, I've made a lot of money. Now I'm getting old and I'm not very well, so I've decided to spend it taking my wife on several luxury cruises each year.

[32 : 50] Now if that man had read 1 Timothy 6, verse 18, he might have viewed things very differently. I don't mean that Christians should never go on cruises.

We all need holidays and holidays are a gift of God's generosity. But where Christians do have extra money, it's good to invest it in eternity rather than in patterns of self-indulgence.

And verse 19 makes this point exactly. Use earthly treasure to create treasure which is out of this world, treasure that brings other people to eternal life.

Just as Jesus says, lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

Earthly money, if it's used to support gospel work, brings more people to enjoy the riches of heaven. Let's invest in heaven. So here are two fragrant fruits of real gospel teaching, contentment and generosity.

[33 : 56] Look back to verses 4 and 5 because there's no contentment or generosity there. Verses 4 and 5 describe a church in meltdown where human relationships are falling apart.

So the difference between the good fruit of gospel teaching and the foul fruit of false teaching is massive. It's the difference between health and ruin, between life and death.

Now let's notice one more fragrant fruit of good teaching and that is the lovely example that Timothy himself is to show to the believers at Ephesus. And this is the subject of verses 11 to 16.

Look how verse 11 begins. But as for you, O man of God. Now this is not the only time when Paul addresses Timothy like that.

Just turn over the page to 2 Timothy, chapter 3, verse 10. 2 Timothy 3.10. You, however.

[34 : 58] Then look at the same chapter, verse 14. 3.14. But as for you. Then look on to chapter 4, verse 5. As for you.

Now these phrases indicate a striking and fundamental contrast. Each time Paul uses that phrase, it follows a passage where bad teaching and bad behavior are being described.

And that's the situation in 1 Timothy 6.11. Paul has just been describing the ruination and horror produced by the love of money. And having shown the foulness of craving riches, he then turns to Timothy and he says, but as for you, Timothy, you're different.

You're a man of God. And your life must be categorically the opposite of the life I've just been describing. Therefore, verse 11, flee these things.

Flee these things. There's love of money and so on. Run. Sprint away from love of money as if you're running from a charging bull. Flee means sprint. Do a Hussein bolt. Don't just avoid the love of money.

[36 : 00] Put a thousand miles between yourself and it. But if he sprints away from something in verse 11, equally, he has to sprint in pursuit of other things.

And these other things are the most gracious and lovely characteristics in the world. Look at them in verse 11. Pursue righteousness. That means the highest standards of human conduct.

Godliness. The character of Christ emerging in human character. Faith. Trust and trustworthiness. Love. Greater man has no man than this, that a man should lay down his life for his friends.

Steadfastness. Never giving up the Christian life. Persevering to the end. Gentleness. The gentleness that Jesus so richly demonstrated. Pursue these things, Timothy.

Hunt them down. Don't be satisfied until they're deeply a part of your character. Then verse 12. Be a fighter. Be a polemicist. A battler for the truth of the gospel in a world that poo-poops it.

- [37 : 04] The Christian is not passive. He's active in proclaiming the faith to others and in defending the faith against the assaults of the world. Then still in verse 12. Take hold of the eternal life to which you were called.

Excuse me, Paul. Did you say take hold of eternal life? Don't I have it already? I've been a Christian for quite a long time. Yes, my son, of course eternal life is yours already.

But learn to enjoy it vehemently. Grasp it. Seize it. Anticipate its fullness with a fierce joy. Exalt in the blessings which are to come. Don't you love those strong, vigorous verbs?

Flee, pursue, take hold. And each of these is to do with a different aspect of the Christian life. The first command is ethical. Flee from godlessness.

The second command is doctrinal. Fight the good fight. The third is experiential. Take hold of eternal life. Be vigorous, Paul is saying, in your ethics, your doctrine, and your experience.

- [38 : 14] So Timothy is to live his life like this as an example to the Ephesian Christians so that they should turn from the false teaching and embrace the true gospel. And we too are called to follow in Timothy's footsteps as he follows in Paul's.

Then at verse 13, Paul gives Timothy not a further command but a solemn charge, a charge made in the presence of God the Father and of God the Son.

I charge you, he says, in the presence of God the Father, the Creator who gives life to all things, and of Christ Jesus who, and notice how Paul leaves the creation here and takes us straight to Good Friday in Jerusalem, Jesus Christ who in his testimony before Pontius Pilate made the good confession.

Now do you remember that moment when Jesus was led before Pilate? Pilate looked at Jesus and said, are you a king then? Which brought from Jesus' lips the good confession.

He said to Pilate, you say that I'm a king. For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I've come into the world. To bear witness to the truth.

- [39 : 30] He didn't flinch even though he knew where it was all about to end. The pressure on him was intense. All the power of Rome could not move him by a hair's breadth.

He made the good confession. So Timothy, Paul is saying, there's your example of immovability. Think of Jesus unflinchingly replying to Pontius Pilate.

And I am charging you, my son, in his presence to keep the commandment, your commission to be a teacher of the true gospel and to do so in a manner unstained and free from reproach until the Lord's return.

And Paul, at this moment, commanding the young man to be a true teacher of the true gospel is overwhelmed by a sense of the greatness and the glory of God.

And that's why he bursts into praise, the kind of praise that was never far from Paul's lips or Paul's heart. And we'll finish with these words about God.

- [40 : 29] He who is the blessed and only sovereign, verse 15, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, who dwells in unapproachable light, whom no one has ever seen or can see, to him be honor and eternal dominion.

Amen. Let's bow our heads and we'll pray. We do thank you, our gracious Father, for Paul's great love for Timothy and for the Ephesian church and for the gospel.

We thank you for this strenuous and vigorous charge and command that he gives to the younger man. And we thank you too, dear Father, for the praise that pours forth from Paul's lips as he thinks of you thinks of the Lord Jesus and what you have done for us.

So we pray, dear Father, that you will give us grace to follow in the footsteps of Timothy, who follows in the footsteps of Paul, who follows in the footsteps of our Lord Jesus.

Help us to honor you and him and we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[41 : 44] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.